

"I fear that in every assembly, members will obtain an influence by noise, not sense. By meanness, not greatness. By contracted hearts, not large souls."

Mr. Speaker, John Adams wrote these words to his wife over 200 years ago, but the same fear lives today.

Congress is back in town and all anyone wants to know is when, not if, we will tear each other apart.

I think we're better than that.

As we move into September, and tonight's address, let's remember how John ended that letter to Abigail:

"There must be decency and respect, and veneration introduced for persons of authority of every rank, or we are undone."

"In a popular government," wrote Adams, "this is our only way."